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251456Z Oct 05

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINSHASA 001776

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/25/2015

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SUBJECT: OCTOBER 21 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT, VP'S:  
ELECTIONS, WAGES, SECURITY SECTOR

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

1.(C) Summary: The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met with the DRC,s President and Vice Presidents October 21 to review election preparations, the impact of current civil service strikes and wage negotiations, and problems in security sector reform activities. Election concerns focused on the tight election calendar and the pending draft electoral law. The potential deficit impact of public sector wage settlements was discussed, with VP Bemba suggesting potential revenue hikes to cover the bill. Security sector questions centered on delays starting the "second wave" of military integration training programs, adoption and implementation of the European Union Security Mission (EUSEC) reform report, and deployments of formed integrated brigades to operational zones. Discussion indicated steps underway or imminent in all areas, but we believe CIAT follow-up will be needed. While significant issues were covered by the three-hour plus meeting, the results were less definitive than hoped or achieved in some previous similar sessions. End summary.

First Up in All Discussions: Elections  
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2.(C) Chiefs of Mission of the member states of the CIAT met for over three hours with President Kabila and Vice Presidents Ruberwa, Bemba, and Yerodia (the "Espace Presidentiel") on Friday afternoon, October 21. Vice President Z,Ahidi Ngoma was not present. Various other officials, including the Defense and Civil Service Ministers, the Vice President of the Independent Election Commission (CEI), and the IMF Resident Representative were also invited to participate in relevant portions of the meeting. The session had been postponed for over two weeks, due to the absence in Kinshasa of one or more of the Vice Presidents.

3.(C) Discussion began with the centerpiece issue of the DRC Transition, election preparations. The CEI Vice President opened with a status update, reporting that over 17 million voters had been registered, but acknowledging delays in rural registration deployments in the last two provinces going through the voter registration process, Bandundu and Equateur. Bandundu, roughly the size of Ivory Coast, is a particular problem with substantially less than half the planned registration centers open. The CEI official stated that registration in those two provinces is likely to have to continue until the end of November, even while registration everywhere else should be completed by the November 13 target date. General discussion focused on the need to maintain the (delayed) constitutional referendum target date of December 18. Vice Presidents Bemba and Ruberwa also voiced various specific concerns primarily related to their respective home provinces of Equateur and South Kivu, respectively. All parties underscored concerns about keeping the overall election calendar on track to ensure full completion of general elections prior to the statutory end of the Transition, June 30, 2006

14. (C) The CEI also reported that civic education efforts have just been started to publicize the draft constitution in anticipation of the constitution referendum. Sample publications were distributed of education booklets and local language translations of the draft Constitution.

15. (C) The GDRC leaders reported that the Council of Ministers started reviewing the draft general election law in a marathon session October 19, with the review to continue October 24. President Kabila and VP Ruberwa expressed some annoyance with a CIAT October 13 communique that had criticized the delay in getting a draft law to Parliament, observing that communication by communique is not the most desirable means of talking. The leaders also pledged themselves to rapid completion of the review and transmission of an adopted draft to Parliament. (Comment: The communique seems to have had its desired effect. End comment.)

Wages, Deficits and Social Unrest  
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16. (C) The Civil Service Minister read out a rather lengthy statement asserting the government,s commitment to civil

service reform and adequate pay, in reference to the ongoing parallel strikes of teachers and many civil service employees. (Note: As reported previously, Kinshasa teachers have gone back to work for at least three months under a tentative deal, but teachers in the interior and most civil service employees remain on strike. Emotions are still tending to run very high over how the government can and will deal with the wretched pay and support levels now provided to most mid- and lower-level public sector employees. End note.) The Minister also noted that an Inter-Ministerial Committee has been established to deal with the ongoing problem.

17. (C) Both CIAT and GDRC officials noted the need to maintain the integrity of the DRC's IMF program, including a balanced budget, while trying to reach a solution to the problems. VP Bemba noted that the GDRC's budget has tripled in three years, but remains in balance. Further increases are expected in 2006, but the wage increases under discussion will need offsets. Bemba suggested that the government will be looking at further revenue increases, including potential new taxes on air travel or in other areas, to close any deficit gaps. Responding to CIAT statements about further expenditure controls, Bemba also asserted that substantial reductions in discretionary areas (e.g., travel), have already been achieved, but observed that the executive does not control the Parliamentary budget where similar reductions have yet to be made. All parties also agreed on the need for completion of a civil service "census" as quickly as possible, with significant anticipated reductions in the claimed payroll available to offset at least a portion of the prospective needed wage increases.

#### Security Sector Reforms

8.(C) The need to improve military pay and support was the first major security-related topic, with current systems widely acknowledged as being totally inadequate. Defense Minister Onusumba attempted to present a summary of steps being taken to improve the situation, and referenced the pending European Union Security Mission (EUSEC) report, which he said "will permit improvements". The Ambassador and other CIAT members pressed the Espace officials regarding the status of the EUSEC report. VP Ruberwa reported that it should be discussed at a Superior Defense Council meeting the week of October 24. Responding to further questions, Ruberwa, Bemba, and President Kabila indicated general support for the report, but both Ruberwa and Kabila stated that "two or three" amendments will be required, without specifying what those will be. In response to the Ambassador's question about an implementation timetable, Ruberwa indicated that implementation should begin in November. Ruberwa and Defense Minister Onusumba also reported that savings realized from the ongoing military census exercise to-date showing lower numbers of troops than previous claimed, were already been utilized to implement long-promised adjustments of flat salaries to ones based on rank and grade. (Comment: Although this falls far short of the kind of wage improvements that are urgently needed. End comment).

9.(C) Designated in advance to take the lead for the CIAT regarding the security sector agenda item, the Ambassador laid out a list of issues, with a particular focus on the growing delays to start the "second wave" of army integration training camps, and related delays in the associated DDR program. The Ambassador also underscored concerns about getting formed and trained integrated brigades deployed to operational areas. He observed that reported long-awaited deployments to South Kivu in recent days were welcome, but these appeared to be from the Kamina (Third) Integrated brigade, rather than the Second Brigade as provided in the national strategic plan. On behalf of CIAT, the Ambassador advanced two specific ideas, to prepare a summary report in coming days of exactly where all soldiers are in terms of regroupment or orientation centers for the next integration cycle, and to convene a meeting chaired by President Kabila to include VP's Ruberwa and Bemba, the Ministers of Interior and Defence, the military Chief of Staff, military district commanders, and CIAT members to ensure "mutual" comprehension of integration, DDR, and other reform plans.

10.(C) Responses, mainly from VP Ruberwa and President Kabila, noted that changes to the national strategic plan may be required in response to changing circumstances (Comment: thus implicitly confirming the Kamina brigade deployment reports. End comment). Both, as well as Defense Minister Onusumba, asserted that significant progress should be seen in the next two weeks to start the next integration training cycle. None of the GDRC officials addressed the two specific suggestions, deflecting discussion toward the next Joint Commission on Security Meeting (expected the week of October 24), other logistics and deployment issues, and other security-related topics. In subsequent discussion, Onusumba defended charges that soldiers going into integration or DDR

programs were not turning in their weapons, asserting that many of these had not been previously issued arms. Referencing voiced concerns that Presidential Guard (GSSP) units had not been included in national integration plans, Kabila countered that all GSSP units would indeed be subject to the integration process at a future date, and that there is an approved plan to this end, but he did not provide details. Several comments were made about former Zairian army officers in Congo-Brazzaville seeking to return to the DRC; Kabila said that he considered them perfectly eligible for DDR programs.

Post-Meeting  
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11.(C) The meeting closed with a President Kabila request to SRSG Swing to provide a read-out of how things were going at the Tripartite Plus meeting in Kampala; Swing had just returned from Kampala. This was followed by general agreement from all present on the importance of moving to ensure disarmament and repatriation of all foreign forces in the DRC following the expiration of the Sept 30 deadline, and the need for supplementary pressure to be exerted against FDLR leaders outside the region. There was tentative agreement for the Espace Presidentiel group and the CIAT to meet again prior to the arrival in the DRC of the UN Security Council, currently expected November 5.

12.(C) The CIAT met subsequent to the Espace meeting. There was general agreement among CIAT members that CIAT concerns had registered, but that fewer concrete decisions were reached during the meeting than had been hoped. CIAT members asked SRSG Swing to send a letter to the Espace reiterating specific CIAT suggestions in writing (e.g. the convening of a general military meeting and the preparation of an integration status summary report). All also agreed that further follow-up will be required during the forthcoming Joint Security Commission meeting, as well as future Espace/CIAT meetings.  
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